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Remarks and Messages

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Founder's Day Convocation Remarks

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Illinois Wesleyan University

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Founders Day Welcome

February 25, 2015

Good morning and welcome to Founders Day, 2015.

Our honored guest speaker today is Anita Lobel, a woman who has captured the attention and stirred the imagination of children for decades through her work as an illustrator and author of children's books. We are delighted to have some of her illustrations currently on display in the Merwin Gallery.

Anita Lobel is clearly at home in a liberal arts environment like Illinois Wesleyan. She is multi-talented, with interests and skills ranging from language study and literature to opera and Harley Davidson motorcycles. Yes, you heard that right—motorcycles! She is serious about her work but does not take herself too seriously.



In a few minutes, Provost Green will introduce her formally, but I want to offer my personal thanks to Ms. Lobel for coming to campus to share her work and ideas with our faculty and students over the last three days. Your commitment of time and effort has been extraordinary. Thank you very, very much.

At the time of our founding in 1850, there were many challenges facing the leaders of this nation. As I read our history, the roadblocks were especially formidable for those who sought to establish an institution of higher learning in Bloomington.

A quick look at our charter provides evidence of just how difficult the financial challenges were at the time. In order to establish a solid financial foundation for the University, there was a last minute alliance between business leaders in the community and representatives of the Methodist Conference. A hand written notation in our charter inserting the word Wesleyan between the words Illinois and University is the result of this alliance and formally established our name.

Listed on the back of your program are the names of those who came together to establish Illinois Wesleyan. This was a diverse group in terms of background, religious beliefs, and walks of life. Many of their names are prominent in this community. I like to think that our current aspirations for diversity of thought, ideas, and perspectives are manifestations of the particular way in which our founding occurred.

The efforts of our Founders have been embraced and sustained over the years by generations of faculty and staff who cared deeply about the mission of the university and worked diligently each day to provide students with an undergraduate experience of the highest quality. That objective is facilitated by the efforts of individual faculty members and in the collective efforts of the faculty as a whole. Both elements are reflected in the special guests who have joined me on the stage this morning.

We have with us today eight faculty members who currently hold an endowed chair or professorship, the highest honor the University can bestow for exemplary teaching, scholarly activity and service to the campus and community.

I would ask each person to stand and remain standing until all eight are introduced:

- Marina Balina, Isaac Funk Professorship
- David Bolliver, Miner Linnaeus Sherff Professorship of Botany
- Vicki Folse, Caroline F. Rupert Endowed Chair of Nursing
- Given Harper, Beach Lewis Chair of Biology
- Carole Myscowski, McFee Professor of Religion
- Mike Seeborg, Robert S. Eckley Professor of Economics
- Gabe Spalding, B. Charles and Joyce Eichhorn Ames Professorship
- Mike Young, Robert W. Harrington Professorship

There are five major committees that carry out the governance responsibilities of the faculty. Representing this group this morning is:

- Nancy Sultan, Chair of Curriculum Council

Please join me in congratulating these distinguished teachers and scholars.

On this Founders Day, we wish to honor the enduring commitment and impact of all those who have served this University over its 165 years. We gather here to celebrate our founders for their conviction and courage and to acknowledge the commitment of the current faculty and staff who sustain that legacy. That inspiration is captured perfectly in a wonderful phrase that appears on our Founders Gate: “We stand in a position of incalculable responsibility...”

Thank you very much.